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SUBJECT: READING PEARL BUCK IN ZHENJIANG

REF: (06) SHANGHAI 7027

11. Summary: Zhenjiang, a city of one million at the junction of the Yangtze River and the Grand Canal, proudly proclaims its connection to Pearl S. Buck, author of "The Good Earth" and 1938 winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. Once unwelcome in China, Buck is now praised as a bridge between cultures.

Instead of seeing her as a reactionary, Chinese fans worry that she doesn't get the attention she deserves in the United States.

On the eve of the 30th anniversary of the formal establishment of U.S.-China relations, interest in this and other historical links, including Buck's agronomist husband, opens the door to renewed cultural connections. End summary

12. As Pearl Buck's childhood and early adult home town, Zhenjiang is actively promoting the author's legacy, most recently with a weekend-long conference October 18-19 in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of Buck's Nobel Prize. The Consul General was a featured speaker at the event, which attracted 100 participants, including several Buck family members from the United States and the board and executive staff of the Pearl S. Buck International foundation in Pennsylvania.

13. The conference and related opening of a Pearl S. Buck museum next to the restored family home is the latest signal of strong interest in this U.S. connection after earlier decades when the Chinese Government banned her books and denied her a visa. In 2002 the city celebrated the 110th anniversary of her birth, three years renaming its public park "Pearl Square" and unveiling a monument at the Zhenjiang No.2 high school where Buck studied and later taught. The newly opened museum shows Buck studying the Chinese classics and calls her a "daughter of Zhenjiang".

14. Zhenjiang goes out of its way to make Consulate visitors welcome, arranging for the CG and PAO to tour the house, museum, and school, where they met with students who had traveled to the United States last winter on a program funded by Pearl S. Buck International. Vice-Mayor Chen Jianshe hosted a dinner for the Consulate visitors, while FY-04 International Visitor Leadership Program alum Xu Bisheng, an urban planning official, spoke with enthusiasm of Chicago's urban planning and an upcoming meeting in Zhenjiang of the Commerce Department-supported American Planning Association.

15. Comment: Zhenjiang's fervor for its long-ago American "daughter" points to possibilities for the upcoming celebrations of the 30th anniversary of U.S.-China relations. One example surfaced on the margins of the conference, where the son of the author's first husband, agronomist John Lossing Buck, described a surge in contacts from China about his father's research and

historical land survey data, recently re-discovered at Nanjing Agricultural University. Conference speaker Amb. Chen Yonglong, vice president of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs and former PRC ambassador to Israel and Jordan, linked the anniversary to Pearl Buck in his remarks and encouraged the pursuit of such connections as our countries commemorate 30 years of restored diplomatic relations.

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